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FIRST LOVE

by

Louis Untermeyer





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Under

FIRST LOVE

A LYRIC SEQUENCE

BY
LOUIS UNTERMEYER



BOSTON
SHERMAN, FRENCH & COMPANY
1911



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**TO
MY WIFE
WHATEVER IN THIS
BOOK IS WORTHY OF HER**



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**TO
MY WIFE
WHATEVER IN THIS
BOOK IS WORTHY OF HER**

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FIRST LOVE

THE linnet is tuning her flute,
The bees are beginning to swarm,
And the music of blossom and root
Is throbbing and joyful and warm.
I am part of the lyrical strife,
I am one with the voices that sing—
While even the stones feel a hunger for life
In the urge and the clamor of Spring!

OH what has caused the sparrow's mirth
That she should sing so light a song—
Oh what has come upon the earth
That it should laugh the whole day long—
Oh who has made his magic thrill
The heart of fairy, flower and fawn—
I looked behind a rosy hill
And saw Him in the dawn.

For it was April—he that comes
With laughter on his lyric lips,
While every happy zephyr hums,
And clouds go by like homing ships.
The sullen day, the torpid night,
The world's indifferent moods depart,
And all things surge with music, light,
Dreams—and the April heart.

A new religion stirs me now
With sacred fervor, and I vow
To be its votary, and share
With song and sunshine everywhere.

Its ministers are birds and trees,
Its choir is the holy breeze,
Its creed: To make the whole world fair
With song and sunshine everywhere.

This is the faith that I will keep,
This is the passion that will sweep
My winter-burdens into air
With song and sunshine everywhere.

For He is risen, and I sing
The throbbing ritual of Spring;
While April moves me, more than prayer,
With song and sunshine everywhere.

THE bush is in bloom and the tree is in flower,
On the lips of a crocus two butterflies
swing;
My heart is uplift with this beauty and
power—
And I am eighteen and as young as the
Spring!

The winds are conspiring in cavern and grot,
The rains are a menace in fallow and firth;
The joy of the Spring is foregone and for-
got—
And I am eighteen and as old as the
earth.

ALL the fields are glad again
Since the rain;
All the shepherds and their herds,
Brooks and birds,
Are a singing wave that swells;
And the bells
Have a newer joyful note
Sounding in each merry throat.

And I, lying on the grass,
Saw her pass;
Saw her face so wistful-wise
And her eyes;
Heard her as she went along
With a song.
And I knew that this was what
Spring had promised—and forgot.

THERE's something missing in the world,
There's something wrong with Spring—
The lips of May are cold and curled,
She will not deign to sing.
There's something common in the breeze
That sweeps the tawdry skies,
And all the trees' green ecstasies
Are hateful to my eyes.

The mirth of earth's a shabby cloak,
A thread-bare guise and thin;
And every wisp of fading smoke
A vision that has been.
My heart is old and dull and dumb,
My songs are incomplete—
She does not come, she does not come
Oh will we never meet!

THE broken bow is healed,
 The wind has lost its sting,
 And life, long mute in farm and field,
 Has many songs to sing.
 Behold, how sweetly is revealed
 The gentle nursing of the Spring.

The winter-tortured trees
 Stand straight and free of pain;
 Despairing rivers, left to freeze,
 Are warmed to life again.
 And all the sick world's agonies
 Have torn the heart of earth in vain.

There is no grass that grows,
 No freshet running clear,
 There is no new-born bird but knows
 The gladness of the year;
 The bruise and burden of the snows
 Have left the world without a tear.

Now Fancy tries its wing,
 Now passions blush and start,
 While even children, touched with Spring,
 Whisper and walk apart.
 And I—I am the only thing
 Still bearing Winter in its heart.

I lay full length upon a fragrant lawn,
 Watching the Dawn
 Unveil her trembling loveliness and bare
 Her growing blushes to the placid stare
 Of lakes, that woke to gaze without surprise
 Into her own bewildered eyes;
 Then caught her smile a moment after
 And broke into a rippling laughter.

And as I dreamed, the mysteries of earth,
 Unknown since birth,
 In every tongue were suddenly made clear;
 Nature translated and I seemed to hear
 The thousand babel voices of the Spring
 Each in its speech the others answering,
 Mingling with songs of vaguely-felt desires
 A myriad slumbers and a myriad fires.

I heard the buds beside the pasture-bars
 Speak of the stars,
 I heard the valley brooklets and the rills
 Echo the meditations of the hills.
 The singing leaves like countless tiny lutes
 Sang of the dreams that stirred the deepest
 roots,
 And every beckoning breeze seemed to dis-
 close
 The romance of the roadside and the rose.

The river grasses murmured for the free
And buoyant sea
So each one voiced its dream—but not a word
Of love and its wild wonders had I heard;
Dumb and insensate things that could not
tell
Aught of the theme which Man has sung so
well!
*I left the place to learn of Love; and after,
I heard the lake break into rippling laughter.*

LIGHTS

**On the heights
And stars in every lake—
The stillness seems to shake
 Watcher and sleeper.**

Wise

**Are the skies—
But touched with April now
Heaven has grown somehow
 Softer and deeper.**

Strange—

**With the change
What secrets lie unfurled!
Yea, and I feel the world
 Closer and keener;**

Back

**Of the black
And endless veils of Night
Have I not glimpsed the Light,
 Once having seen her.**

Earth
Giving birth
And death in every wood—
Marvel misunderstood—
 I know the heart of it;
Life
And the strife
Making the mighty wince—
Have I not felt it, since
 She is a part of it?

Though
I may know
Naught of her care and grace
Still will her slender face
 Rise to o'erwhelm me;
Still
Will she fill
And color all my hours—
She of whom stars and flowers
 Always will tell me.

Oh woodlands, hang your banners out
And wave them all till Death;
Oh winds, exult with me and shout
Till you are out of breath;
Oh Spirit of the Spring, employ
Your every subtle art—
But you can never match the joy
That leaps within my heart.

Sing louder, louder till you fail,
Impulsive little throng;
Oh wonder-stricken nightingale,
Is this your wildest song?
Oh laughing millions everywhere,
You should be twice as gay;
Oh what a sky and what an air—
I saw my love to-day!

It was but yesterday I went
Through woods where turmoil ceases;
A golden day was almost spent,
The dazzling robe of heaven was rent
 Into a thousand pieces.
And musingly I walked along,
Humming a happy song.

And, after threading many a maze,
 Just how there is no telling—
More in a dream than in a daze
I looked beyond—and lo, my gaze
 Fell on her little dwelling.
A miracle—a sweet surprise—
Breathless, I raised my eyes.

And toward me from a surging sky,
 There came the sound of singing;
It was my love—she wandered by
With half a smile and half a sigh,
 And passed me, lightly swinging.
Then, wrapped in sunset, she became
Splendor and singing flame!

I HAVE discovered where she lives
 And loiter near the place;
 The thought that I am near her gives
 Me solace for a space.
 Here is the gate with rusty springs,
 Here is the garden small,
 And here her dress has brushed the things
 That grow about the wall.

She sees this swallow that returns
 To nest among the eaves;
 Her feet have stirred these very ferns,
 She may have touched these leaves.
 Her very presence must have blessed
 These things that fly or crawl;
 Even the twigs that I caressed
 She knows, she loves them all.

She is a part of all that grows,
 Of all that dares and dreams,
 She is the fragrance of the rose,
 The soul of laughing streams.
 And though I never see her near,
 No sorrow burdens me;
 Her grace, her charm is always here
 In everything I see.

THERE is no Death to conquer Spring
And tear us with an unknown pain—
For she will always come to sing
The ancient throbbing back again.
And love, once gained, will live and bring
With every year a fairer flower;
Then why is Youth the only thing
That comes and dies within an hour!

GREEN is the blooming thicket,
Green is the budding bough,
And ivied wall and wicket
Are green and glowing now.
The freshening color passes
Through Spring's own veins, and fills
Green trees and seas and grasses,
Green vales and verdant hills.

And while the emerald fire
Sweeps over all the earth,
From Winter's gleaming pyre
Are lit the flames of Mirth;
And Youth and April Weather
In ecstasy are seen
To rise and dance together—
Green in a world of green.

SWALLOW, tardy swallow,
Hasten your returning,
Spring's already burning
In every heart and hollow.

Swift with exultation,
Flames are sweeping over
Towns and fields of clover,
Men and all creation.

Only she, my own,
Greets me unaffected;
Still the same—a resurrected
Sappho—carved in stone.

Earth and I reprove her
But she listens dumbly;
Nothing seems to move her—
She is too calm and comely . . .

*Leave her, oh leave her,
 Winter's disdains,
 Earth, put the fever
 Into her veins,
 Lash out the coldness
 Till with a start,
 Half-blushing boldness
 Quickens her heart;*

*Burn her with wildness,
Burn—till the sting
Rouses her mildness,
Fires her with Spring!*

Oh she is proud as the virtuous goddess
 Flashing a fate that is sterner than death;
Oh she is calm, and her blossoming bodice
 Never is swayed with a passionate breath.

Oh she is cold as the Moon is to Pierrot
 Mocking his dreams and his wistful desires;
And she smiles like a Valkyr smiles on a hero,
 Watching and waiting the while he expires.

Oh she is cruel, her spirit would harden
 An angel in tears on a comforting quest,
But oh she is fair as the dawn in a garden—
 And Beauty's the virtue surpassing the rest.

“THE river turns to the peaceful breast
 Of the brooding sea,
 The red-bird turns to his mate in the nest,
 The bud to the bee;
 Oh learn, my love, from this sweet unrest—
 And turn to me.

“The twilight sinks in the arms of sleep
 At the day’s decline;
 The spent winds softly sink as they weep
 In the arms of the pine—
 Come down, oh love, from your frowning steep
 And sink into mine.

“The breeze has a tale for the ear of the rose,
 And her fragrance is stirred;
 The Spring has a secret that everyone knows—
 But I have not heard;
 Oh love, ere the miracle draws to its close,
 Whisper the word.”

WHEN she would go from me, can I reprove
her;
When she says "No," is there naught I can do?
Is she too young that my songs do not move
her,
Or is my tongue unaccustomed to sue?

Ah, but I know of a way that is better,
I will not show her my grief, but a smile—
Smilingly, when she would go, I will let her,
Possibly then she will linger awhile.

UNDER the stars—the wistful, mild May stars
 In April-haunted skies,
 There comes a dream of storm and sudden
 cries,
 Of flashing faces, and the straining spars
 That gleam an instant by the pasture-bars—
 And then the vision dies.

Under the stars—the wistful stars of May—
 The farm sleeps silently.
 And oh what should this portent mean to me
 Here where the world is lost and slips away—
 Oh what have I to do with storm and spray
 And children lost at sea!

Under the stars—and nothing moves that mars
 The landscape as it lies;
 And yet I start among unanswered cries,
 Shipwreck and terror, pain and evil wars—
 Under the stars—the wistful, mild May stars
 In April-haunted skies.

AWAY with doleful maundering, away with fretful days,

Away with all that smacks of grief, of tears and banners furled,

An end to dull perplexities, an end to old dismays,

There is promise in her eyes—there is promise in the world.

Her mood is subtly changing; she has whispers for me now;

Her eyes meet mine more quickly, and more quickly leave my gaze.

Her heart perhaps has melted to a word somewhere, somehow—

And the thought of her surrender is a thing that heals and slays.

The thought of her surrender—can it be, this breathless dream—

Is it not a barren splendor, a rainbow of the mind;

Have I not been over-eager to discover in the gleam

Of friendly looks and casual smiles, all that I hoped to find

But away with vague imaginings, away with
 moon-struck Youth,
An end to maudlin fancies—this day I shall
 be free.
Is it Love she means or jesting, is it mockery
 or truth?
I shall mope and sigh no longer—*I shall ask
 her, I shall see!*

“To-morrow—to-morrow—to-morrow—”

It beats like a double refrain
That blends with a challenge to sorrow,
A burden of pain.

To-morrow—to-morrow—to-morrow
She said she would answer my prayer.
And shall I go gently, or borrow
A conquering air . . .

To-morrow—to-morrow—to-morrow
And every hour is a year.
'Tis night and the daylight is far—oh
That morning were here.

My soul, if e'er your eyes were moist,
If cares have ever vexed your brow;
My songs, if you have ever voiced
A single, tender "thou";
My heart, if e'er you have rejoiced
Be buoyant now.

My soul, how could you ever doubt
That she was less than all divine;
My heart and songs, how could ye flout
My worship at her shrine;
For I am hers—oh sing it out—
And she is mine.

DAWN—and the vision glorious at last,
 I feel the sweep of life in every part,
 I hear the planets rushing through the vast,
 The mountain-rivers thunder in my heart.
 The earth is turned to leaping fire and flood,
 The skies, like waving banners, are unfurled,
 The winds, the seas, are pounding in my blood—
 I am the wakened pulse of all the world.

*She is mine—I am ocean and thunder,
 I am flame in a glory of fire,
 I am lifted with new-revealed wonder,
 With gladness too great to desire.
 Oh fire and flood, let me sweep her
 With love that no man can divine—
 Oh stars, let me hold her and keep her,
 She is mine—she is mine.*

Dusk—and the vision glorious still glows,
 But softer, gentler on the world it lies;
 I hear the hours whisper, and the rose
 Murmurs a breath of perfumed lullabies.
 I hear the crickets and the early stars
 Singing their songs amid the twilight-stir,
 I see the rudest things without their scars,
 And I have felt the world—because of her.

*She is mine—I am calmness and quiet,
I am faith, I am peace in the night,
I am hallowed with godhood, and by it
We shall win to the worthiest height.
Oh dusk, make me nobler and deeper
With love that no man can divine—
Oh stars, let me hold her and keep her,
She is mine—she is mine!*

LINGER awhile, oh day of happy tears,
 Of trembling gladness and of weeping joy;
 Linger awhile before the twilight fears
 And the forebodings of the night destroy
 All that my heart still hears.

All that my heart still hears are broken words,
 Phrases and tones too sweet to be believed—
 Half-sighs that fluttered from her lips like
 birds,
 Or like some poignant bit of song that
 grieved
 In lovely minor thirds.

Day, when thou goest, each morn will seem to
 say
 Thou hast come back from strange and dis-
 tant climes—
 Thy face shall never fade nor pass away,
 And thou shalt be re-born a thousand times,
 Thrice happy, tearful day.

Now leaps the lyric madness
 From field and sheltered grove;
 They sing about our gladness,
 They celebrate our love.

Birds in the distant mountains
 Among the pine and fir,
 And laughing, leaping fountains,
 Are eloquent of her.

Breezes that thread the passes
 Of forests far above,
 And leaves among the grasses,
 Whisper about our love.

Rivers and brooks are theming
 Our numbers amorous,
 And lakes that lie a-dreaming
 Murmur and muse of us.

Bells in the parish steeple
 Chant us with ringing tongues,
 And all the merry people
 Repeat our happy songs.

But oh my soul is harried
 With this pervading doubt—
When we are dead and buried
What will they sing about?

Down in the vale the singing birds have nested;
 I hear them every morning at their play
 Singing about our windows unmolested—
 But thou and I are happier than they.

Out in the woods I heard the breezes telling
 How glad they were now Spring had come to
 stay;
 With light and happy airs their songs were
 swelling—
 But thou and I are happier than they.

Close by the lake I listened to the flowers
 Breathing their joy of every shining day;
 “None happier than we, no joy like ours”—
 But thou and I are happier than they.

Last night I heard two angels beat their
 pinions
 And sing “Praise God; His smile and gentle
 way
 Make us the happiest things in His domin-
 ions—”
But thou and I are happier than they!

OUR love is like the soothing rain
 That follows clouds and thunders,
 It comes to fill the world again
 With fresh and blooming wonders.
 It sweeps away all baser things
 That flourished once unthwarted,
 And washes clean the low and mean
 Until they glow transported.

Our love is like the kindly snow
 That covers great and small things,
 Whose very softness seems to throw
 A glamor over all things.
 It makes of every common spot
 A holy thing and tender,
 And every dark and ugly mark
 Is hidden by its splendor.

Our love is like the steadfast sun,
 A force to fire and quicken
 The sluggish joys that feebly run
 Through all that droop or sicken.
 And yet, although we need it most,
 We see it never; knowing
 That none may gaze upon its face—
 It is too great and glowing.

Who has heard the Night
 And the Silence singing,
 Who has heard the meadows ringing
 When the hills rejoice;
 Who has heard the bright
 Songs when stars are christened—
Every being who has listened
To her voice.

Who has seen how Sleep
 Ended Day's dissembling,
 Who has seen the wistful, trembling
 Souls of butterflies;
 Who has seen the Deep
 When the skies dissever—
All the people who have ever
Seen her eyes.

Who has felt the birth
 Of all sweeping powers,
 Who has felt the thrill that towers
 To the worlds above;
 Who has felt the earth
 When one dear head is nested—
Only I, for I have rested
In her love.

“ONLY of thee and me the nightwind sings,
Only of us the sailors speak at sea,
The earth is filled with wondered whisperings
Only of thee and me.

“Only of thee and me the breakers chant,
Only of us the stir in bush and tree ;
The rain and sunshine tell the eager plant
Only of thee and me.

“Only of thee and me, till all shall fade ;
Only of us the whole world’s thoughts can
be—
For we are Love, and God Himself is made
Only of thee and me.”

OUR phrases fail, our very murmurs cease;
 Held are our fancies in the simple thrall
 Of evening's solace and the twilight's peace—
 Peace and a tender hush that seems to fall
 Like dark wings over all.

A low wind falters, like a breath held back;
 Faint rumblings die; a distant window glows;
 And even, as the hills turn softly black,
 The nightingale forgets to sing, foregoes
 His raptures to the rose.

And now the stillness speaks to deep and height,
 And we—with breathless bird and trembling
 star—
 Worship while Silence sings and holds the
 Night;
 Silence, whose secret songs are fairer far
 Than God's own voices are.

Roses—they are here!
 Here in all their splendor,
 Royal and austere
 Delicate and tender;
 Each and every kind
 June at last discloses—
 Everywhere I look I find
 Roses—roses.

Rose whose heart is red
 Like the blood of heroes,
 Rose with yellow head,
 And the modest tea-rose,
 Grow beside the wall
 Or in garden closes,
 Till the teeming world is all
 Roses—roses.

Roses proud and bright,
 Scorning to be lowly,
 Roses meek and white,
 Holiest of the holy,
 Tell me is it true
 That, though none supposes,
 Summer decks her bed with you—
 Roses—roses.

Roses pale and thin,
Faintly touched with fire,
Roses that have been
Wedded to the briar,
Overrun the land,
For my joy reposes
Here 'mid Song and Sunlight, and
Roses, roses, roses.

THEY say that she is fickle,
That all my love is vain,
That ere the shining sickle
Is hushing down the grain,
She will betray and show her
Unfaithfulness to me—
How little do they know her,
For that could never be.

And so the foolish prattle
Falls on a careless ear,
For all their tales and tattle
Are laughable to hear.
Such gossip does not hold me;
For that she loves me well
Her eyes and lips have told me—
What more is there to tell?

I LOVE the murmur that begins
 Among the reeds and 'celloes,
 When all the varied violins
 Tune up among their fellows.
 I love the little pause—for then
 What joy the short suspense is;
 But oh, the leaping pulses when
 The overture commences.

I love each heart-beat of the drum,
 Each breath when flutes are dying,
 The world, I feel, is overcome
 When clarinets are sighing—
 I love the grandiose sweep of strings
 That tears me with its passion—
 (Save one) there are no nobler things
 For God or man to fashion.

And this would be my dearest choice—
 I would give Music's splendor
 To watch her sing—to hear her voice
 In some old song and tender;
 I would give every trumpet-call
 To hear one ballad ringing
 From her who cannot sing at all
 And does not care for singing.

DEAR, since we both are held in Love's command,
 Why all this idle speech and feigned surprise;
 See, see how near, how breathless-close we stand—

Open thy eyes!

Dear, thou art grown so careful of thy grace,
 Thou hoardest, like a miser, all thy charms;
 Cease weighing every kiss and swift embrace,
 Open thy arms.

Dear, I have gained thy heart but not thy side,
 Now must the struggle end, and thou give
 o'er—

I am Love-crowned—I cannot be denied,
 Open thy door!

IN each other's arms we lay,
In each other's arms we slumbered;
And like waves, unknown, unnumbered
Visions rose, and died away.

And at last I woke and wept,
Wept till I was worn and breathless;
Wept because I had been faithless—
I had sinned the while we slept.

For I dreamt of woods astir,
Moonlit seas and great expanses,
Dreamt of music and romances—
And my dreams were not of her.

EVERY night I climb the stair,
 And with every fresh ascending
 Comes the moment of despair.
Will she meet me—will she dare
 And each night (oh happy ending)
 She is there!

People fear the house—they say
 It has stood unclaimed, unwanted
 Since a dying lover lay
 While he heard his love betray;
Sprang up—and the rooms are haunted
To this day.

But we come here where no eye
 Watches us, where all that hovers
 Over us is evening, shy
 Passion and a friendly sky—
 What care we for faithless lovers,
 She and I?

Splendidly Night sings one tune
 For us and all eager lispers;
 And our voices falter, soon
 We sit trembling-dumb with June
 Then come longings, broken whispers
 And the moon.

ONE perfect week—one week of joy untainted
 When every daybreak whispered rapturous
 news,
 When Life and Love were gloriously painted
 In unimagined tones and sparkling hues,
 When we were gods—or spirits newly sainted.

One perfect week—it ended but this morning,
 With all the dreams of a transfigured earth.
 They came again with tales and words of warn-
 ing
 How that her love was light and little worth ;
 And oh I hearkened, I who had been scorning.

One perfect week—to think it should have
 ended—
 To think that Spring had fired the earth in
 vain,
 That all the marching years serene and splen-
 did,
 By one stray doubt should now be wholly
 slain.
 And yet—cannot a shattered faith be mended?

ONCE more are the glorious
 Wonders amassed—
 Love was victorious,
 Doubt did not last.
 The days I abhorred
 Are forgotten and past;
 Faith is restored.

I feared to speak to her,
 I, with my shame—
 Mournful and meek to her
 Slowly I came;
 I told of my doubt
 And awaited her blame;
 She did not cry out.

She grew not wild at me;
 Shaking her head
 She only smiled at me
 Softly, and said,
 “Words, words, my adored,
 Here are kisses instead”—
 Thus Faith was restored.

I toss upon my bed, am burned and chilled—
She sits beside me sometimes, smoothes my hair,
And even as she tends me, phantoms stare
And whisper shameful things I thought were
stilled.

*“My love (she speaks—and what has changed
her smile)*

*I must be going (can these be her kisses)
I have been here an hour—quite a while
For such a clear and joyful day as this is.”*

About my head the grinning planets waltz,
And nameless things point at her lips with
scorn;

I try to call, to cry out “It is false”—
But something chokes me—I am sick and worn.

LAST night we walked among the paths of air;
The earth with all its rude and ancient scars
Had faded out, and there was nothing there
But starlight and the stars.

Each star stood planted like a budding shoot,
And on the ground of Heaven a crescent
lay—
Lay like the rind of some exotic fruit
A god had thrown away.

And further still we wandered till we came
Upon the very burning edge of space,
And saw the unborn worlds still wrapped in
flame
Hiding God's face.

And then my soul in agony and fear
Turned to my love; but oh, my love had
gone—
The skies were empty, terrible and drear
—And I was there alone!

“WHILE the world is soothed with sleep,
 Wrapped in fever I am lying,
 And I hear the angels weep—
 Who is it that lies a-dying?”
 “Dearest, dearest,
 What thou hearest
Are the winds that wander sighing.”

“Nay, for I can see his face,
 Burning with its fearful story;
 Look—it glares at me through space
 Like a death-head, scarred and gory.”
 “Dearest, dearest,
 What thou fearest
Is the moon in all its glory.”

“Woman, hush; I hear him now
 Crying ‘I have come to kill thee.’
 And his blade is at my brow;
 Now does fear and anguish fill thee?”
 “Dearest, dearest—
 ‘Twas the merest
 Touch—I kissed thy brow to still thee.”

Come, oh Love, my best physician,
Help me—I am sore distressed;
Come and cure this wild suspicion
That is tearing in my breast;
Rid me of this premonition—
Give me rest.

Thoughts that thrust my heart like sabers,
Take them all away with you—
Let me face the meddling neighbors—
Let me tell the carping crew
“See—in spite of all your labors
’Tis not true!”

AUTUMN has come—to-day I heard it all—
Aye, while the woodland spirits held their
breath
The young trees trembled and a birch let fall
Some yellow leaves in nervous fear of death.
Yet Summer lives within my heart, for still
The lover's magic lingers in her lips,
And oh she charms away the thoughts that
chill
With songs of Springtime in her finger-tips.

UNDER the cover of the soothing Night,
I bared my heart with all its woe;
I bared my heart that she might know
The fears that poisoned each delight,
And why I suffered so.

Under the cover of the soothing Night,
I told my trouble like a child
In broken sentences and wild,
She was not moved—with eyes still bright
She looked at me and smiled.

Under the cover of the soothing Night,
My love and I in anger went,
And when my storm of words was spent
Her hand within my hand lay light—
And I was well content.

WHEN the Dusk enshrouds
Visions sharp and hateful,
When Night's blurring fingers
Smooth each tawdry spot,
Then the heavy clouds
Lift and leave me grateful,
And the fear that lingers
Is forgot.

When the day is near
And an hour thereafter
Still the earth inherits
Peace and calm delight,
Then afresh and clear
Comes her sunny laughter—
And my stricken spirits
Long for Night.

An hour before the challenging gleam
Of dawn that heralds the day,
My love awoke in the midst of a dream
And turned to where I lay.

I felt her breath grow wild and warm
And her arms about me twine,
And she whispered a name as she turned to my
arm—
A name that was not mine.

And then she slept at my breast as fast
As though she were never so dear;
But I knew that the glory of Love had passed,
And I knew that the end was near.

SHE has left me for a while—
Not in anger or in passion—
Left me, saying with a smile,
“Love is out of fashion;
’Tis a garment only meant
For the minstrel and romancer”—
And I watched her as she went,
Struggling, speechless for an answer.

Now I wander to and fro,
Up and down the ruined orchard,
And I rave and scarcely know
Why I am so tortured.
Does she mean to tear my heart
All afresh with this new flaying,
Or, I wonder, is it part
Of a game she tires in playing.

I SENT her a fortnight ago
A lily, a rose and a song;
Three fair little symbols to show
That Love had forgiven the wrong.
And I said to the flowers, "*Be fair,*"
And I said to the song, "*Be my voice*";
And I took and I placed them with care
In a book that had made her rejoice.

To-day she returned them to me
Unanswered, untouched and untried—
And I wept, when I found them, to see
My three little tokens had died.
Voiceless they died in the dark,
The flowers for lack of a tongue;
But the song had the soul of a lark—
And the song had not even been sung.

My soul is sick of roses,
Of lilies proud and pale—
In scented garden closes
The old-time beauties fail.
And though the spell reposes
On every flower that grows,
My soul is sick of roses
Since she has scorned the rose.

My soul is sick of singing,
Of whispered strains and sighs ;
Like kisses cloyed but clinging,
The spell of Music dies.
And though the world is ringing
With all its lyric tongues,
My soul is sick of singing
Since she has scorned my songs.

WHEN the August days were in April mood
I mind a morning of amethyst,
When the slender trees on the hill-top stood,
Ghosts of green in the silver mist.

The scene is the same—it is August still—
There's mist—but I look for the magic in
vain;
The dawn is a blur, and there loom on the hill
Ghosts of gray in the sagging rain.

MOUNT up my songs, mount up to her
Upon your wingéd phrases;
Each lyric be a chorister
That only chants her praises.
Oh steal into her thoughts and sing
The strains that used to win her,
Until you have revived the Spring
And found the heart within her.

NIGHT, sing to her
 All of thy songs.
 Night, bring to her
 Dreams that will cling to her,
 Dreams that will move her with tears for my
 wrongs.
 Night, sing to her.

Night, care for her—
 All of her sins,
 Night, bear for her—
 Beauty's a prayer for her,
 Beauty's a prayer which she ends and begins—
 Night, care for her.

Night, sing to her
 All that has lain
 Like a dead thing to her—
 Bring the lost Spring to her;
 Sing the heart back to her bosom again—
 Night, sing to her.

*“Love’s a garment only meant
For the minstrel and romancer.”*

This is all that she has sent
To my pleadings as an answer.

How the words come back again,
Still as careless, still as bitter—
Like a harsh and mocking strain
Played upon a tinkling zither.

Like a prisoner chained alone,
Dullness binds me, wrist and ankle—
All the evil thoughts are gone
But the words remain and rankle.

*“Love’s a garment (so it went)
For the minstrel and romancer—”*

Aye—the robe was never meant
For the nightshift of a dancer.

I ~~HATE~~ her soul—'tis like some poisoned
flower—

A blight, a curse, a brand upon her brow;
But never, even in our dearest hour,
Were all her charms as maddening as now.

If God last night had raised His hand
 And suddenly withdrawn the light,
 If He had swept the stars like sand
 Into a corner of the night;
 If He had held the meteors back
 And torn the moon from out the skies,
 The darkness would have been less black
 Than was the earth before my eyes.

All day I heard an evil wind
 Echo a thousand hateful views,
 In every face I seemed to find
 The bearer of some dreaded news.
 All day in mad review there passed
 Portents and rumors wild and drawn,
 And then—the dream come true at last—
 Her house was dark—and she was gone.

Gone—and I sink beneath the press
 Of bitterness that naught controls;
 Gone—and this petty faithlessness
 Destroys a universe of souls;
 It shakes one's faith in all things pure,
 It taints with cynic gall the sweet—
 If love like hers cannot endure,
 Is life itself as much a cheat?

God—I can scarcely grasp it yet,
 It is too black to be;
 The ways are darkness, fear-beset,
 And not a hand is reached to me—
 I knew the world might leave me thus,
 But of all others—she!

If I could only curse and smite
 If I could only rail—
 But here I sit alone and write
 The thoughts that make me gasp and pale;
 Wild and blaspheming things I write,
 And watch the sunset fail.

I watch the scattered little swarm
 Troop homeward through the mists,
 And there a boy has claimed an arm
 Of one who smiles and scarce resists—
 How long until she plays him false,
 I think, and clench my fists.

And here, another happy two
 Come talking secretly.
 Oh lad, before this month is through,
 Whose will her fluttering glances be—
 Love lightly then, with laughing lips,
 But never love like me.

Lest all day in a cankered mind
 Distrust war with despair;
Lest evil conquer, and you find
 In eyes that once seemed clean and fair
Deceit, the mockery of Love—
 And falseness everywhere.

*God—I can scarcely grasp it yet,
 It is too black to be;
The ways are darkness, fear-beset,
 And not a hand is reached to me—
I knew the world might leave me thus
 But of all others—She!*

God made her when he dreamed his fairest
dream,
And called the angels that they might re-
joice;
God sang into her heart, and lo, the theme
Lives in her swaying voice.

God made her when He breathed His softest
word,
Shaping her gentler than His gentlest ways;
God blessed her, and the very suns were stirred
To rapture at her gaze.

God is so good He would not harm a flower,
At evil only His creation halts—
Oh then what spirit, what malignant power
Could make her soul so false?

SHE loved me? Nay, she never did,
She only played at loving;
Her heart was quite too small and light
For aught but mild reproving.

I knew it even from the first,
Ere she grew cold and ashen—
For when we kissed I felt we missed
The nobler part of Passion.

There were no bonds of common cares,
No dreams, no kin devotions—
And in her heart there was no part
For wild and deep emotions.

Love? It was but a little gift
One gives to each newcomer—
It was a thing that came with Spring
And went within a Summer.

Oh who are we that we are given Love—
What whim of God's was this that we should
 know
A leaping fervor and a fearless glow
 That is not known above;
We are not clean and pure enough a race
 To look upon its face.

Oh who are we that we should have all this—
This joy, this glory, this divine appeal,
This fire that God Himself can never feel,
 This sudden power and bliss.
Why are we burned and blessed and burdened
 thus—
 It is too great for us.

In the woods the little elves
 Hide themselves
Under mossy rock and mound,
 Under ground;
And they frolic as they play
Through the night and all the day—
Merrily the little elves
 Sport themselves.

When an elfin (so they say)
 Loves a fay
They will kiss and find a grot—
 And if not,
Neither sighs nor pines away,
Neither ceases from its play . . .
Oh, what things could men themselves
 Learn from elves!

'Twas in the sunny weather I threw my heart away,
I tossed it to the Springtime, and the thousand shapes of joy—
And who should chance to find it but a woman who, they say,
Had lacked a heart herself and so she took the pretty toy.

'Twas in the cloudy weather I found my heart again;
It came back to my window, complaining bitterly—
It came back bruised and begging, haggard and torn with pain;
But I laughed and let it perish—what use was it to me?

A MEETING—a sighing—
A deal of lament—
A little denying—
A final consent—
A kiss and a quarrel—
“Oh Powers above!”
The tale has no moral—
And this is Love.

YEA, though I hate her with a deathless hate,
I shall not curse at her nor yet her kind;
For who would rail and scoff at one whose fate
Was to be maimed or blind?

Such lives receive our pity—not our scorn,
We help them make their broken pleasures
whole;
And shall I harm her then—she who was born
A weak and crippled soul?

BREEZES, be still—
Bear not her perfidy abroad,
Lest birds that innocently thrill
Should cease to sing with God.

Flowers, be brave—
Fade now and never bloom again,
Lest happy hearts should find you grave
And learn your secret pain.

Stars, close your eyes—
Do not betray the world's disgrace,
Lest ocean lift up to the skies
A horror-stricken face.

Dreams, you must die—
No more my bitter thoughts shall move,
Lest all an outraged world deny
The miracle of Love.

THROUGH Time unborn, undying,
The waters wail and weep,
They never cease from crying—
They cannot even sleep.

Their anguished cry is heard in
The heaven and earth below,
And none may know their burden
And none may know their woe,

But I—who would be lying
Where they, my brothers, weep,
Who never cease from crying
And cannot even sleep.

UNREST is laid upon me like a blight.

When I recall her wrong, her false embrace,
A sudden fury shakes me in the night
And then—the quiet beauty of her face.

Mood follows mood; my world is overcast
With too much brooding on a woman's
frown;

Enough of lonely sorrow—and at last
I have gone to the town.

Faces, everywhere faces; surge on surge
The human billows thunder through the
street;

What ocean trembling upon what a verge,
What roaring seas, what tides that storm
and beat.

Faces and towers, cars and women whirl
Everywhere, endless—till my senses seem
Lost amid odors, lights and sounds that swirl
As in a dizzy dream.

A dream that I have dreamed—and now made
plain

That nightmare flash beneath the mild May
stars!

Here are the straining faces, here the pain,
Here are the shipwrecks and the evil wars.

Here do I move among unanswered cries,
Here in the town of lives outlived and vain,
The dream, the storm, the fear, the strange-lit
skies,
Sweep over me again.

And I had come for pleasure, for relief,
To gaudy crowds and over-brilliant lights—
Better the gray field and the quiet grief
Than this loud mockery of city nights.
The veins of town are poisoned with decay,
Its heart is throbbing with a futile stir . . .
What must the city do to those that stay—
What has it done to her?

I WANDER homeward, many a mile,
 Alone and in the noon of night;
 The Moon accosts me with a smile—
 I am so pale and white.

“Why are you here,” She asks me, “Why
 Do you not slumber ere I wane?”
 Alas—She does not know that I
 Can never sleep again.

The houses stand a somber host,
 No sound the dreaming night invades;
 And like a mournful moonlit ghost
 I steal among the shades.

There’s not a soul that roams abroad—
 The shadows crouch austere and stark,
 The very trees are overawed
 And huddle in the dark.

There’s not a star but finds its lake—
 Night pillows every restless head,
 And I alone am left awake—
 Oh God—that I were dead!

THERE'S a garden, a vale
Where no nightingale sings,
And it nurtures the pale,
And the strangest of things,
For the folk are all drones
And the trees have no boughs
In the Valley of Bones.

There's a garden that blooms
With the tears of distress,
And the trees are the tombs
That will never grow less,
And the flowers are stones
That blossom and blanch
In the Valley of Bones.

There's a garden that blooms
Where all bitter things cease;
A vale that assumes
All the beauties of Peace,
For no one atones,
And no one repents,
In the Valley of Bones.

I stood within the city of the dead
And walked awhile among the little coombs,
The winds of dawn were waking as I read
The legends on the tombs.

Here was the mausoleum of a priest,
Here were the graves of those who fought
and bled,
And here lay one who builded West and East—
His was a splendid bed.

But only one it was that made me pause—
A granite slab scarce two feet high and wide,
Hidden away, because its owner was
A common suicide.

And there I sat, and wondered why he died,
And watched the weary stars grow dull and
dim;
And how I yearned to have him at my side—
To sit and talk with him . . .

All night long I heard the rain
 Calling me—
 Wake and weary, worn with pain,
 All night long I heard the rain
 Sobbing to the same refrain
 Endlessly.

And when I could bear no more,
 When the call
 Grew into a frenzied roar,
 I arose, and blindly swore
 I would end it—have it o'er
 Once for all . . .

In the streets I woke from swoon
 Suddenly;
 For the rain had changed its tune
 To a simple, soothing croon—
 And a kindly mother-moon
 Smiled on me.

And into the night, my mad
 Thoughts were hurled.
 Like a child that has been bad;
 Somewhat shamed and somewhat sad
 Back I crept, at peace and glad
 With the world.

THANKS to God I did not die
 After my despair;
 Yesterday, bewildered, I
 Saw the world turn fair.
 Saw my lost one—saw her face
 After all these years.
 Lo, and as she met my gaze
 In her eyes were tears.

Tears—in eyes that never wept!
 Tears—that naught could start!
 Oh what miracle had swept
 Skies to wake her heart.
 Something, not of her control,
 Changed her even now;
 Something finer—call it soul—
 Lay upon her brow.

Thanks to God I did not die
 In that bitter mood;
 Thanks to God indeed that I
 Saw that life was good,
 Saw that still my hopes might breast
 Countless waves of years—
 Aye, for God Himself has blessed
 Love re-born in tears.

THE world is ours again—
 Ours is the heavenly rout—
 For, as the healing rain
 Freshens the rose,
 Sadness has made us whole
 After the bitter drought,
 And the despairing soul
 Blossoms and glows.

*Sing, heart, sing, lips, sing, promise of the morrow,
 Love is not Love that has not tasted sorrow.*

All, all is ours again—
 The hour with wonder fraught—
 The passions near to pain
 We feel anew;
 For lovers need the years
 Of tender speech and thought,
 But Love itself needs tears
 And suffering too.

*Sing, heart, sing, lips, sing, promise of the morrow,
 Love is not Love that has not tasted sorrow.*

The world is ours again—
The world and its belief;
The purpose is made plain
Below, above.

It only needed this—
This miracle of grief—
To make our wayward bliss
A perfect Love.

*Sing, heart, sing, lips, sing, promise of the mor-
row,
Love is not Love that has not tasted sorrow.*

ENVOY

*So end the lyrics of my earliest passion—
First love, with all its fever and its fears—
So wakes the new love in a nobler fashion,
So die the little griefs and shallow tears.*

*But Joy will live and Spring can never perish—
Youth in my heart will burn until I die;
And all the beauties that my soul may cherish
Will fill a richer earth and vaster sky.*

*For now Love comes with all the early fire,
The exultation and the leaping joy,
Blended with something homelier and higher—
Peace and a faith the years cannot destroy.*



